



KENNEDY & COMPANY

CORDIALLY INVITE YOU TO AN

EXHIBITION

of

DRAWINGS

of the

NO DANCE

And BLOCK PRINTS

By

BERTHA LUM

At their Galleries

785 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK

May, 1931

THE No, or ghost play, was the first dramatic form known in Japan and the world's oldest expression of the dance. There were at first several forms of it, requiring various names, but, since the Sarugaku No became the prevailing one, it has been commonly known as Nogaku or, even more simply, No. Its form is most nearly expressed by the words "lyric drama," with the conditions of understanding drama simply in the sense of general action and realizing that the lyric quality is poetic, rather than musical.

Originally the word No was a verb meaning "to be capable of"; evolving to mean "that which one performs," and now used to indicate the thing performed—the drama.

It attained its complete form and state of perfection during the last years of the XIV century; varied but little in the next century and has since then remained entirely unchanged.

The stage and approach are placed in the main hall, in the midst of the audience, and surrounded on three sides by the boxes. On the "Flower Path," leading to the stage proper, are three pine trees in pots, symbolizing "Heaven, earth, and humanity," and painted at the back of the stage itself, is a branching pine, symbolizing "faithful endurance." This setting is never changed.

The costumes are beautiful beyond belief, richly ornamented masterpieces of weaving and color, having been borrowed, with some variations, from the ancient court robes. Warriors are indicated by the "hachi-maki," a straight band of material wound about their heads

and tied at the back, allowing the ends to hang down; swords are often seen and, though much more rarely, bows and arrows. Masks are almost invariably worn, their use having been brought over from China at a very early date. They are all historic, having been designed by great artists for the parts they fill, characters of every age and type. Except in the case of demons and tengu (giants with beaks, long noses, glaring eyes and claws) they follow the dimensions and features of the human face. Wigs are often used, as are most elaborate head decorations.

To completely understand these plays one should have a knowledge of Buddhism and of the world of spirits that lies beyond. For they are all plays of ghosts who wander, seeking the happiness that they did not find on earth; of dead people but of living passions, of those who return, between the setting and the rising of the sun, to seek fulfillment.